

Pakistan Society of Development Economists: Secretary's Report

I would like to present a short review of some of the major activities of the Society since its inception and present the programme of the Society for the next year.

Aims and Objectives

The Society, based in the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. This registration ensures that the Society maintains its autonomy and grows in its own right. It is a unique institution. It is an autonomous body with a constitution and bye-laws that govern its functioning. Its decisions are taken independently without any interference from any quarter but with active consultation among its members. The Society is not a trade union of development economists. It only provides an academic forum for contact between economists associated with the Institute and those outside the Institute. The Society aims at achieving professional excellence and at the creation and dissemination of knowledge in the field of development economics. According to its charter, the Society encourages perfect freedom of economic discussion. The Society does not take any partisan attitude nor commits itself to any position on practical economic issues.

The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, the Society's sibling, has always, but especially during the last few years, produced a substantial body of both fundamental and applied research in development economics. We at the Institute, have always believed that this research can provide a sound basis for economic policy-making. The results of the research are published, by the Institute, in its quarterly journal *The Pakistan Development Review*, research reports, monographs and various other publications. The dissemination of knowledge through the printed word has an important role but has suffered from some distinct shortcomings. First is the time lag, a technical-cum-institutional one, between the finalization of a research study and its publication for use by policy-makers and other research scholars. The technical lag has been considerably shortened at the Institute through the streamlining of printing procedures for the publication of articles in the *Pakistan Development Review*. An international board of editors was appointed in 1980. Each article received for publication is sent to at least two referees who have to agree that the article meets the minimum standard of acceptability. The refereeing process has paid us dividends, as the

standard of articles appearing in the *Pakistan Development Review* has been considerably raised. However, the sending of articles to outside reviewers is a time-consuming process and has increased the time-lag between the receipt of manuscripts and the decision to accept the papers for publication. The second shortcoming of the printed word has been that it does not provide any effective feedback mechanism from policy-makers and research scholars to the author of the research output. The *ad hoc* holding of occasional seminars is not an adequate measure for increasing such feedback.

To eliminate this lacuna the Institute decided in 1982 to evolve an institutional framework for the effective dissemination of the fruits of its research among academic scholars, government economists and policy-makers dealing with economic matters. It was thus that the Pakistan Society of Development Economists, whose aim is to provide a mechanism for the exchange of views, came into being.

The basic objective of the Society is to deepen the awareness of the mystique of the growth process in Pakistan. In performing this task the Society, instead of being a closed body for economists only, has opened itself and has enlisted in its ranks policy-makers and concerned intellectuals who directly and/or indirectly make an impact on economic policy-making and, through it, on the shape of both development economics and economic development in the country.

Membership

The members of the Society, who number 396, are predominantly from within Pakistan but its membership extends to almost all the continents of the world, and includes four nobel laureates who are Professor Gunnar Myrdal from Sweden, Professor J. Tinbergen from the Netherlands, Professor Arthur Lewis from the Princeton University and Professor Lawrence Klein from the University of Pennsylvania. The members are mostly economists but other social scientists interested in economics and economic matters are not excluded. The growth in the membership of the Society can be seen from Table 1.

Lecture Series in Development Economics

Shortly after its registration on October 19, 1982, the Society decided to organize a series of lectures in development economics. Eminent economists, represented on the international editorial board of the *Pakistan Development Review* and members of the Advisory Board of the Institute, were requested to deliver lectures on topical issues in development economics. Twenty-two eminent economists agreed to deliver lectures under this series. These lectures review the state of the art, provide a synthesis of the relevant literature and suggest promising areas for further research. Each lecture along with the discussion thereupon is published by the Institute in its series of lectures in development economics. Each speaker spends some time at the Institute and critically reviews the designing and implementation of the Institute's

Table 1

Membership of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists, by Category and Year

Category	1983	1984	1985
<i>Regular Subscribing Members</i>			
Pakistani	86	157	210
Foreign	9	15	19
<i>Institutional Members</i>			
Pakistani	107	111	114
Foreign	50	50	52
Total	252	335	396

research programme. To date, eight distinguished development economists have delivered lectures under this programme. The detail of these lectures is presented in Table 2.

These lectures were largely attended. The themes chosen so far have been topical and very relevant to policy-making in Pakistan. The first lecture was held on January 2, 1983 and the last one was delivered on January 3, 1985. Professor Winfried von Urff, the eminent German development economist will be delivering two lectures on October 16 and 17, 1985 and will be the ninth speaker in this series. Four of these lectures have already been published and are a major contribution to their respective fields of enquiry. The remaining lectures along with the discussions are in various stages of publication.

Quaid-i-Azam Lecture

The Society has instituted a 'Quaid-i-Azam Lecture' to honour the memory of the father of the nation. This lecture to be delivered every year is based on unpublished research by scholars of international repute. We hope these lectures are a befitting tribute to the memory of the father of nation who was known for his intellectual excellence, integrity and decisiveness, and who held in his heart and mind a special place for the poor and the underprivileged in the Society. The first lecture under this programme was delivered by Prof. Ismail Sirageldin of the Johns Hopkins University on "Demographic Perspectives for the 1980's" during the First Annual General Meeting of the Society. The second Quaid-i-Azam Lecture on "Some Neglected Topics in Development Economics" was delivered by Professor M. Ali Khan on May 14, 1985. Dr Ali Khan's lecture is an excellent theoretical exposition of the importance and fruitfulness of neoclassical economic theory in not only addressing topical questions but also in analyzing the structure of the economic system.

Table 2

Details of Lectures held in the joint Lecture Series of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics and the Pakistan Society of Development Economists

No.	Name	Date of Lecture	Topic of Lectures
1.	Prof. Ismail Sirageldin	January 2-3 1983	(i) "Population and Development in the 1980's: Some Critical Issues for Policy & Research". (Two lectures)
2.	Prof. Gustav F. Papanek	April 25-27 1983	(i) "Determinants of Income Distribution and Poverty: The Current State of Knowledge" (ii) "A Model of Labour Income Determination: The Effect of Labour Intensity on Income Distribution and Growth" (iii) "Development Strategy, Growth and Equity: Populist and Growth Oriented Governments in Southern Asia"
3.	Prof. Mahmood H. Khan	Sep. 4-5 1983	(i) "Classes and Agrarian Transition in Pakistan"
4.	Prof. Gunnar Fløystad	Oct. 29-30 1983	(i) "Free Trade versus Protection: Static and Dynamic Aspects". (Two Lectures)
5.	Prof. Ansley J. Coale	Dec. 14-15 1983	(i) "The Demographic Transition and its Implications for Population Trends in the LDCs". (ii) "Population Growth and Economic Development - Coale and Hoover Re-examined after 25 years"

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Table 2 - (Continued)

6.	Prof. Jagdish N. Bhagwati	Jan. 15-16 1984	(i) "Development Economics: Lessons from Postwar Experience" (ii) "The New International Economic Order : What Next"?"
7.	Prof. Stephen E. Guisinger	May 24, 1984	(i) "Investment Incentive Policies in Developing Countries: A Comparative Analysis"
8.	Prof. Vernon W. Ruttan	Jan. 2-3 1985	(i) "Technical Change and Agricultural Development" (ii) "Toward a Theory of Induced Institutional Change"

Annual General Meetings

The Quaid-i-Azam Lecture and the lectures in development economics delivered by world renowned economists deal with development issues in the general context of the developing countries, mainly because most of the speakers may not be very familiar with the particular problems facing Pakistan's economy. The annual general meetings of the Society, on the other hand, focus almost exclusively on the social and economic problems of Pakistan. Such meetings provide a forum where its members meet each year for an intensive exchange of information. Each year papers on various subjects focussing on a pre-selected theme are presented and discussed. It is assumed that the inaugural address by the Patron-in-Chief and the keynote address by the President of the Society will, each year, provide some new insights into important unresolved aspects of the development process and spell out the broad features of the new paradigm that development economics is. The closing session of such meetings is concerned with a stock-taking of the research activity at the Institute, its future direction and the theme for the next annual general meeting of the Society.

From the papers presented at the annual general meetings, a selected number of papers are edited for publication in the *papers and proceedings* issue of the *Pakistan Development Review*. This issue is roughly equivalent to two or three regular issues of the *Pakistan Development Review*. We attach great importance to the publication of the proceedings of our meetings. Although our meetings are largely attended, we do understand the reasons why the members cannot exactly cluster round the venue of

the conference like moths round a flame. Travelling and staying in a hotel is very costly and the financial resources at the disposal of the Society barely suffice to finance the participation of those members who are either contributors of papers and/or are official discussants. The published proceedings, at least, whet the appetite of those unlucky members who cannot make the yearly trip to the venue of the meetings.

The rules under which papers are published in the proceedings issue are different from those applicable to the articles appearing in the regular issue of the *Pakistan Development Review*. The length of the papers is strictly limited. The papers are also not subjected to any referring process. Unless a paper is without any merit, all papers received prior to the printing deadline and satisfying the space criterion are automatically accepted for publication. The papers which are of high quality and cannot be shortened to meet space requirement are, with the approval of the authors, published in the regular issue of the *Pakistan Development Review* after the usual refereeing process. From the 30 papers presented and/or circulated in the First Annual General Meeting, only 18 were published in the papers and proceedings issue and four articles were chosen for publication in the regular issue of the *Pakistan Development Review*. The remaining 8 papers were either not revised by the authors or it was decided that no useful purpose would be served by their publication.

The somewhat relaxed editorial policy for the papers and proceedings issue of the *Pakistan Development Review* serves a number of important objectives. The papers presented in the meetings are exploratory and discursive in content and style rather than definitive treatments of research issues. These papers explore the current state of economic research at the very frontier of economic knowledge. Early feedback from other scholars should be especially rewarding as the refereeing process always implies a long delay. The large number of articles in one place enable the readers to sift through the economic literature outside their fields of specialization. Authors get an opportunity to report on current research and to summarize their forthcoming publications. Though the papers are not refereed, they pass through the editorial scissors that eliminate repetition and any matter that is without merit. The published papers provide an accurate picture of the state of thinking in many areas of development economics. Even a cursory look at the *papers and proceedings issue* of the last year's meeting that appeared a few months back should convince the reader of its extreme usefulness to the academic economist, government economist or policy-maker. We believe that the proceedings issue of the *Pakistan Development Review* is the first of its kind ever published in the developing world. Matters connected with the editorial policy, publication criteria or the coverage of the issues dealt with are, of course, open to discussion by the members of the Society.

Essay Competition for Young Economists

The lectures and the proceedings of the meetings should produce, in time, a body of economic literature on Pakistan which should be useful to university students,

academic scholars and policy-makers. The quality of such reference material depends on many factors. In the final analysis, it should depend on the state of the economic profession in Pakistan and the intensity of its interaction with the world community of economists. The society has evolved a package of incentives for the development of the economic profession in Pakistan. Each year an essay competition will be held which will be open to all young economists who have earned their master's degree not more than two years before the closing date for the entries of the competition. The competition carries three cash awards of Rs. 10,000.00; Rs. 5,000.00; and Rs. 3,000.00 for the three best essays. The announcement of the competition will be carried in all the national and regional newspapers. The essays, for awards, would be judged by an independent panel of eminent scholars. We plan to announce the topics of the essay competition after due approval from the executive council and the governing council of the Society. I hope that the winners of the first essay competition would be with us next year in the third annual general meeting of the society.

Gold Medal Awards

To encourage Pakistani economists in making outstanding contributions to development economics, the Society has instituted a gold medal award which will also carry a cash prize of Rs. 25,000/-. The award will be made only when a deserving contribution comes to the Society's knowledge. It shall not have any specified frequency. An elaborate procedure for the award has been evolved to ensure that only outstanding economists earn this honour. However, I must not raise expectations too much on this score because it would take quite some time before the system of awarding gold medals is fully institutionalized. In addition, there is a provision for awarding honorary life membership of the Society to economists and policy-makers who make a mark in development economics and/or on economic policy-making. We hope that these incentives would spur the members of the economic profession in Pakistan at both junior and senior levels to new heights in their professional advancement.

Directory of Economists

In order to facilitate interaction amongst members of the economics profession in Pakistan we are preparing a directory of economists. A questionnaire has already been circulated to collect pertinent information about the professional status and background of the respondents. The response to the mail-return forms has, however, been poor. Only 350 of the 1800 questionnaires mailed have been returned to us. We intend to send an enumerator to different cities of Pakistan to expedite the survey work. I would urge the members present here and economists elsewhere in Pakistan who have not filled in the questionnaire to fully cooperate with the enumerator. We hope the directory of economists would provide useful information. It would facilitate contact among economists and provide a profile of the economic profession in Pakistan.

Institutional Links with International Organizations

To date 72 economists from outside Pakistan have been enrolled as members of our Society. Six of them attended the first annual general meeting while the number of members attending the second annual general meeting, from outside Pakistan, increased to ten. Their presence in Pakistan at the time of the annual general meeting provides a unique opportunity for Pakistani members to interact with them regarding the latest trends in economic thinking abroad. We believe in an outward-looking policy for the intellectual exchange of ideas. We have approached the International Economic Association for enrolment of our Society as a member. We have been informed that this matter would be considered in one of their forthcoming meetings. We feel that our formal association with the International Economic Association should provide a valuable institutional mechanism for exchange of information between members of our Society and members of economic associations of other countries.